

MICHIGAN READING FIRST GRANT APPLICATION 2005-2006
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

This document contains frequently asked questions and responses regarding the Reading First grant application for 2005-2006. For further clarification please feel free to contact us:

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

1. What is the amount of training required for grant years 1, 2, and 3?

ROLE	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3
Teachers	30 hours of foundations (LETRS) 25 hours of application (publisher) Weekly grade level meetings (30 min)	25 hours of application (publisher) New teachers trained Teacher retrained as needed Weekly grade level meetings (30 min)	New teachers trained Teachers retrained as needed Weekly grade level meetings (30 min) Ongoing PD that reflects data and needs
Coaches	Same as above Coaching training (ongoing) 4 statewide coaches meetings/yr Additional training as necessary Weekly grade level meetings (30 min)	Same as above Coaching training (ongoing) 4 statewide coaches meetings/yr Additional training as necessary Weekly grade level meetings (30 min)	New teachers trained Teachers retrained as needed Weekly grade level meetings (30 min) Ongoing PD that reflects data and needs 4 statewide coaches meetings/yr
Principals	Administrators Leadership Training (2 days) Additional training as necessary	Administrators Leadership Training (2 days) Additional training as necessary	New principals trained Principals retrained as needed

2. Can a school use Reading First money to pay for building professional development outside of Reading First?

No. Reading First professional development is extensive and funds should be spent solely on Reading First activities.

3. What is the building/district requirement are far as paying for professional development?

The Michigan Reading First grant sponsors any statewide training for coaches and/or administrators. Participants are reimbursed for mileage and housing (if necessary) but are not paid a stipend for attending on these days. The building/district is responsible for all Reading First professional development at the local level for K-3 Reading First teachers and pays for this out of their Reading First budget.

4. Can grant money be used to pay for the DIBELS training?

The State will provide DIBELS training for your literacy coach(es) and the State Reading First facilitator assigned to your district will train the teachers. If you need to hire subs or pay stipends for after school sessions, the grant will pay for that.

5. Would we be able to determine if our own professional development based on sound research?

You will first need to meet all of the PD requirements of Reading First. Most districts have found this amount quite extensive and haven't added more to the building/district plan.

COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMS

6. What choices do we have when selecting the comprehensive reading program?

Eligible LEA's choose one program from the five programs listed on pages 24-25 of the Michigan Reading First grant application. *We strongly encourage applicants to carefully review all five programs to ensure that the program that is selected best suits the unique needs of the district/buildings.*

7. Our district adopted and began using one of the approved comprehensive programs this school year. We are using it in all K-5 classrooms and using the program's intervention kits with our Title 1 students. For some students, more is needed. How stringent will the grant be in what we can do to help those students who need even more support than the program provides? We have some, but not all, of the supplemental materials listed in the grant. We also have other materials to support instruction in the five basic areas.

Purchasing the intervention materials developed by the comprehensive programs has been quite successful with some of our buildings in Round 1/2. You may want to look at the total program package. The grant requires you to use assessment data to plan instruction, to progress monitor, and to plan for individual needs should a child still struggle after the 90 minute block and the intervention in small groups.

8. After using our comprehensive program this year, we are finding that there is not enough within the program to effectively cover the GLCEs in writing. How much flexibility will we have in supplementing writing?

Module 9 of the LETRS professional development addresses writing. Your teachers will examine student writing as an indicator of students' literacy acquisition and the reciprocity of reading and writing. We always ask districts to think about how effectively/thoroughly teachers are implementing the comprehensive program and how well teachers understand what writing shows as a window into students' literacy understandings. Most buildings find they need to continue writing instruction outside the daily uninterrupted literacy block.

9. If my building/district has recently purchased one of the comprehensive programs available for purchase with Reading First funds, do we have to make another purchase?

If you have the version (or more recent) listed in the grant announcement, you do not need to repurchase the comprehensive program. Some programs do have updates so if you are purchasing a new one, then you should select the 2005 edition.

10. What flexibility do we have in using the resources, specifically the comprehensive program?

You will need to implement the comprehensive reading program effectively and with fidelity. There is language in the legislation that addresses "layering on"--you can't keep doing what you've always been doing and add on more layers. You will need to rethink literacy instruction in your buildings. Remember, districts that are eligible to apply for RF \$ have large numbers of children who are not being successful. If what we were doing were being successful, then the district would not be eligible in the first place.

11. Can we use our Grade Level Expectations to determine our scope and sequence?

All of the publishers have correlated their comprehensive programs to the GLCEs. You can find these on their websites, or you can ask them to provide you with copies.

12. It looks like the core materials are important to the grant in order to guarantee a curriculum, and we agree with that. Our problem is that we have a well-

developed system for guided reading and teachers are afraid they will have to throw that out to use only the materials in the core. Can you clarify that?

The building/district first needs to fully clarify what kind of Guided Reading you are currently using (i.e., Four Blocks, Fountas & Pinnell, Rigby, Scholastic, etc...). When you select the comprehensive program, you are agreeing to implement it fully so the comprehensive program and any supplemental materials you purchase from that program are your first choice for instruction and all comprehensive programs have a component for small group instruction. We've found some cases where the comprehensive program books may not go low enough or high enough to meet students' needs. In these cases, it could be allowable to integrate additional materials but the caution is that the specific student needs dictate the book choice (not just going into a bookroom and picking a favorite book). Teachers need to keep detailed documentation of the teaching/learning goals for book choices to document that the book indeed moves the student progress forward. An independent "bookroom" guided reading program done along side the comprehensive program would be considered "layering".

SUPPLEMENTAL/INTERVENTION MATERIALS

13. Would the Accelerated Reader program work with Reading First? Can it be used in the block?

Accelerated Reader is not an approved program under the guidelines of the Reading First grant and cannot be purchased with Reading First funds or used during the daily uninterrupted literacy block. See pages 24-27 of the grant announcement <http://www.mireadingfirst.org/readingfirst/apply/grantann.pdf> for more information on programs and materials.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

14. Can Reading First funds be used to purchase materials for grades 4-12 special education students?

No. Reading First is a K-3 initiative that includes special education students in the K-3 grade range. Special education teachers K-12 should be included in Reading First professional development and funds may be used for training materials and/or released time.

15. We have a school that would benefit from the Reading First structure, training and accountability. However, just under a third of the classrooms are categorical and services autistic children. How are those classrooms a part of the grant and what is the evaluation?

Since Reading First includes all K-3 students and all K-12 special ed teachers, it's possible that these classrooms could be included. We need to examine the IEPs for each of the children to determine if literacy acquisition is reasonable on a case by case basis. Buildings are accountable for achievement gains for all students counted in their K-3

reporting for award allocation. If a special education student is included in the total count, then Reading First requirements apply.

16. Because the target for the grant is K-3 and K-12 special education, can grant money be used to purchase the comprehensive program to be used in K-12 special education classrooms?

The grant targets K-3 only; K-12 special education teachers are included in the professional development training.

17. Do special education classrooms need to follow the minimum 90 minute literacy block--the same as regular classrooms? What is the role that special education teachers play in RF?

K-3 special education programs that include Reading First students need to provide the 90 minute (minimum) uninterrupted literacy block. Special education teachers can support their students in Reading First by working in general education classrooms during the literacy block. The student's IEP ultimately dictates the service delivery.

ROUND 1 & 2 SCHOOLS ELIGIBLE FOR ROUND 3

18. Are current Reading First buildings eligible for apply for the Round 3 of Reading First?

Yes; districts should rank order buildings according to need and documentation of persistently low MEAP/ELA scores. If buildings that were involved in Round 1/2 are still eligible, they may certainly apply for Round 3.

19. We have seven schools that were funded under Phase I, Cohort 2 and so are applying now to continue their RF efforts. We will also likely be adding some new schools for RF funding. The RFP is obviously oriented toward schools that do not currently have a research-based reading program in place. How do we address in the narrative (Section E) that some buildings are continuing their efforts and already have a program in place and that others are starting anew? Given that we have two different types of schools applying, how do we best differentiate this in Section E? Must each building be addressed individually in Section E?

You could group your plan into Cohort 2 and Cohort 3 categories. For Cohort 2, they are already implementing the grant, but you could discuss enhancements and improvement plans; for Cohort 3, you could discuss the professional development and the selection of as well as the implementation of the comprehensive program you have been using in Cohort 2. You could include any "lessons learned" from Cohort 2 that will enhance Cohort 3 implementation.

20. What will be the professional development requirement for schools that have been in Round 1 or Round 2 and are applying for Round 3 funds? We have completed the required 50 hours of publisher training with the program that we are continuing to use and we have completed our LETRS training.

Round 3 grantees that have been involved with Reading First prior to 2005-2006 and are funded again in Round 3 are still required to deliver 50 hours of training in scientifically based reading instruction over 2 years. MI Reading First will be using a program called Teacher Reading Academies that incorporates research based instruction, the Michigan Grade Level Content Expectations (Language Arts) and publisher training. In addition, any new K-3 teachers (including special education) will need to receive LETRS training (30 hours) and returning K-3 teachers may need retraining as deemed appropriate by the building literacy team. (See also Question 1)

ASSESSMENTS

21. Can only the teacher administer DIBELS --or if we also train our paraprofessional and Title I staff, can they assist in administering DIBELS during those three times per year that all students are assessed?

We do not recommend that paraprofessionals give the DIBELS assessment. The classroom teacher gains the most useful information when giving the DIBELS to students in her/his own classroom. Together with the literacy coach and the building literacy team, the best use of resources can be determined for each building.

22. Are there specifically required screening and diagnostic tests other than ITBS & DIBELS or are districts able to choose additional diagnostic tests?

See Attachment A of the grant announcement (p. 21-23) for more information regarding assessment guidelines. Diagnostic tools should be used to pinpoint data that will help teachers design appropriate intervention plans for students. As with any assessment, there should be a match between what tool is used and the information needed.

23. We would like to use the Terra Nova in place of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS). Is this acceptable?

No. Since all buildings funded in Reading First are participating in a state and national research study, the assessment requirements are very explicit. You can see from the assurances and assessment sections in the Grant Announcement and Instructions that the standardized measures used in all Michigan Reading First buildings for reading are the ITBS for grade 1-3 and the Gates-McGinitie for Kindergarten students.

COACH/FACILITATOR

24. Would a Reading Recovery trained teacher without a Masters Degree qualify for a literacy coach?

Scenarios such as this will be handled on a case-by-case basis. Consideration would require a detailed description of training, any graduate work, and professional experiences that make the candidate qualified to be a literacy coach.

25. Would a teacher with a Masters in something other than Reading or Early Childhood (such as Special Education or General Education) meet the qualifications of a literacy coach?

Scenarios such as this will be handled on a case-by-case basis. Consideration would require a detailed description of the candidate's Masters program, whether the candidate has completed adequate coursework in literacy, and how it supports the work of a literacy coach.

26. Who hires the Reading First Facilitator ? Who hires the literacy coach?

The Michigan Department of Education hires the Reading First Facilitator that supports funded Reading First buildings. The funded LEA hires the building literacy coach(es).

LITERACY BLOCKS

27. Do literacy blocks have to occur in the AM or can they be staggered? Should they be all at the same time for each grade K-3?

Scheduling literacy blocks is a task that requires great planning to insure they are uninterrupted and long enough. Most literacy blocks do occur in the morning but this is not necessarily a requirement. For example, there may be contract language that stipulates preparation time must occur for some grade levels in the morning and this would make the block feasible only in the afternoon. Ideally, grade levels have common literacy block times so they can also have common planning time. Literacy blocks should be scheduled to maximize the instructional opportunities for the children and not for the convenience of adults.

28. What is the role of Title I (Part A) if the classroom teacher is doing 90 minutes (minimum) of literacy instruction?

Title I, Part A can serve math and literacy. Only literacy may be addressed during the uninterrupted literacy block. Reading First is a classroom based program and does not allow pull out programming during the literacy block. Title I, Part A will need to schedule Reading First students at times other than the uninterrupted literacy block. Title I, Part A funded personnel can support the literacy block by providing in-class services in coordination with the classroom plan for instruction and intervention.

29. What do you mean by a "literacy block" of time?

Daily literacy block of instruction for 90 minutes minimum --120 minutes is preferred. The block of time should be uninterrupted (no announcements, assemblies, field trips, etc).

30. How does ability grouping fit with the Reading First grant?

Reading First focuses on effective classroom literacy instruction and meeting the needs of students in small groups, interventions and so on. Ability grouping in the traditional sense would not be compatible with Reading First. Teachers will receive extensive support in the effective implementation of the comprehensive reading program, use of assessment data to inform instruction, the essential components of reading instruction, and so on. Focus is placed on the needs of the child.

OTHER SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES

31. How do Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) programs fit with Reading First?

Reading First has very specific requirements that must be met. The CSR grant covers a broad range of initiatives that may or may not address literacy. All Reading First requirements must be met.

STAFF/UNION SUPPORT

32. Does "80% buy-in from staff mean they "support" or "do not block"the Reading First Plan as written in the grant?

In order for this initiative to be successful, all key stakeholders need to work together and support each other.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

33. We are a charter school and do not have attendance boundaries. I don't know how to fill out the page in the grant concerning Participation of Private Nonprofit Schools. In addition, what do I do if we don't have a union?

These pages do not apply to charter schools. Simply enter N/A. We will adjust the scoring for this chart and the union president chart so that charter schools are not penalized for these points.

RESEARCH

34. Where did the research come from that stated 95% of students can learn to read proficiently?

The best resource for this information is the Florida Center for Reading Research
<http://www.fcrr.org/science/science.htm>

PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS

35. A year or so ago we heard that the next round of Reading First grant funds could be used to develop preschool programs for urban districts with high poverty levels and high numbers of at-risk pre-school children. Are there or will there be funding sources available to develop pre-school programs?

The Reading First grant is implemented K-3. The Early Reading First grant deals with preschool programs. For more information on Early Reading First, see
<http://www.ed.gov/programs/earlyreading/index.html>.

GRANT APPLICATION

36. Is Part E of the grant application one overall plan for the district or is this something each building must complete?

Part E of the Reading First grant application is an overall plan for the district. This plan is then uploaded with each building applying for grant funding. Do not write a separate plan for each building in Part E.

37. Does the percentage of poverty have a "weighing" factor in who receives the grant? (i.e. 8% compared to 30%)

Yes. There are priority points for this factor and you can view these on page 13 of the grant announcement: <http://www.mireadingfirst.org/readingfirst/apply/grantann.pdf>

38. Is the Reading First grant funding period 3 years or 6 years?

Michigan's Reading First grant was funded for 6 years. The grant started in 2002-2003 and is now in its 3rd year. Round 3 applicants for 2005-2006 will receive funding, pending adequate yearly progress, for the final three years.

39. How does a continuing RF school analyze in Part B its currently used program, materials, and assessments as anything other than excellent?

You can include an explanation in the uploaded document by building that describes any additional improvements buildings still need to address. In addition, it would be important to examine how effectively the building has implemented the comprehensive program.

40. On page 15 of the "Important Information" the school is asked for assurance that the school will provide "professional evaluation of school data". Does that mean that a district needs to hire an independent evaluator or just have its reading coach analyze the data?

No. The University of Michigan conducts the evaluation. The assurance refers to the district providing access to the student data and cooperation with the State's outside evaluator. The district does not set aside funds for an outside evaluator.

41. What constitutes a “building library”? Can it be shared between 2 buildings?

As long as the K-3 children have access to the library and are able to check out books.

MEGS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

42. How do we get help with MEGS problems?

Judy Byrnes, whose phone number is listed at the top of the FAQs, is our MEGS expert working with the Reading First project. Sarah Uhle can also answer most of the questions related to MEGS, and she is often more available, so should be contacted first. Sarah is also your first point of contact with budget questions.

43. We are having trouble getting access to the Reading First grant application on MEGS? Why can't we get in?

First, make sure there are one or two people with Level 5 access to MEGS. Find out their name(s) and phone number(s). Secondly, decide who needs to be added to MEGS for the Reading First grant application process, and give their MEIS account numbers to the Level 5 mention above. For help with these steps, contact Judy Byrnes or Sarah Uhle, or refer to the MEGS presentation available from the Reading First website (www.mireadingfirst.org) or the MDE MEGS website (<http://megs.mde.state.mi.us/megsweb/>).

44. In the grant instructions, it refers to Part A through Part H of the application. I can't find anything but Part G in MEGS. Why?

Before all the lettered Parts will appear in the Program Information section of the Reading First Application Menu on MEGS, at least one of your schools or buildings needs to be added. To do this, click on the “Add/Review Schools” part of the General Information section on the Application Menu. Schools can be added or deleted at any time and in any order, but at least one needs to be added before you will see those sections. The building code asked for on that page is the MDE building code assigned to the school, not the local district building code. To verify the correct code, go to <http://cepi.state.mi.us/scm/> to access the School Code Master for Michigan.

45. How do I deal with a teacher, or a title-I person who is shared across more than one grade level? I can't enter a fraction into some of the fields in Part A.

Enter that you have 1 such teacher available to K-3.

OTHER

46. How can we project our potential Reading First grant award?

Reading First funding is based on a per pupil allocation as stipulated in the grant application on page 5. You can estimate the amount of a potential award by using the K-3 enrollment from your most recent count (February 2005).